

**Remarks**

The following is a response to the Office Action dated August 14, 2002.

In the Office Action, the examiner has rejected claims 1-3, 6, 8, 20 and 22-23 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over Timm et al. U.S. patent 5,890,061 in view of newly cited Japanese reference JP04276900A2.

Takeuchi '931 does appear to include a voice amplifier section 3 that outputs a voice at speaker 7 with a constant sound volume independent of a sound volume control. However, the Takeuchi '931 reference is directed to an emergency alarm broadcast receiver that is in receipt of an emergency alarm broadcast. At least with respect to the English abstract, there is no disclosure that the emergency broadcast receiver of the Takeuchi '931 reference is to be used in a two-way speech communication, as defined in claims 1 and 20. It is doubtful that a person skilled in the art would incorporate the amplifier section 3 of the Takeuchi '931 reference to the vehicle emergency system of Timm.

There is no disclosure in Timm or Takeuchi '931 of a volume control circuit that automatically controls a volume level of a sound in response to a desired volume signal, as defined in claim 22. The basis for the amendment to claim 22 is given on page 22, lines 9-14 of the specification.

It is respectfully submitted that the examiner is in error with respect to the rejection of claim 2 by the combination of Timm and Takeuchi '931, insofar as claim 2 recites the volume control circuit also "inhibits a user from changing the volume level". Claim 3 recites "means for allowing a user to change the volume level", which was not taught in Timm or Takeuchi '931. Claim 6 is also believed to be unobvious over Timm and Takeuchi '931 insofar as those references fail to teach any "means

for receiving a volume level control signal from the emergency report receiving center" and "means for controlling the volume control circuit to adjust the volume level of sound generated by the loudspeaker in response to the received volume level control signal".

In view of the above, applicant respectfully submits that claims 1-3, 6, 8, 20 and 22-23 each are unobvious over the prior art.

Claim 4 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over Timm and Takeuchi '931 and further in view of Fujiki et al. U.S. patent 5,188,891.

Fujiki discloses a radio communication device 1 that can generate an emergency radio signal for long distance report and generate a beep sound to notify people who are not far away from the emergency device. By the examiner's comments, it appears that the examiner fails to appreciate the recitation of "third means for preventing the volume level for moving out of a predetermined range after the volume level has changed via the second means".

Claims 5 and 7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Timm and Takeuchi '931 and further in view of Nevins et al. U.S. patent 5,949,886.

Nevins discloses a microphone level controller for use with a speech recognition system. In column 1, lines 30-33, Nevins specifically discloses that his invention is to be used with a speech recognition system, that sets a volume level of a microphone in response to measured environmental conditions. Yet Nevins, and Timm and Takeuchi '931, fail to disclose any "means for controlling the volume control circuit to adjust the volume level of sound generated by the loudspeaker in

response to a detected level of background sound noise. Despite the examiner pointing out Fig. 1 of Timm, there does not appear to be any disclosure in Timm of any external device that sends out a volume level control signal to the emergency reporting apparatus, as set forth in claim 7.

Claims 9 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Timm in view of Iacono U.S. patent 4,633,229.

In contrast to the assertion made by the examiner in the Office Action, Iacono does not teach the replacement of loudspeakers of an audio system, when a speaker is found to be defective, as recited in claim 9. Iacono only discloses a siren system that is made of a number of speakers that are mounted in a certain way so that phase cancellation effects could take place for the different speakers. Column 8, lines 1 and 2 pointed out by the examiner refers to the second embodiment as shown in Figs. 7, 8 and 9 in which the rectangular speakers 18 of the first embodiment are replaced by the round speakers 118 shown in Fig. 8. Therefore, the rejection of claim 9, and the claims depending therefrom as noted in items 5-8 of the Office Action, is respectfully submitted to be without merit.

Claims 17 and 21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Timm and Okano Japanese reference JP04276900.

Despite the examiner's assertions, it appears that Okano '900 discloses different speaker sections 19 and 20 being laid out along roadways through which emergency vehicles may traverse. The different sets of speakers, which correspond to different routes, are activated by an automatic broadcasting processing section 13 when emergency vehicles are to travel along the different routes. Thus, the prior art does not teach any "means for automatically selecting one from among a plurality

of loudspeakers of the audio system as the handsfree speech communication loudspeaker" as recited in claim 17 and similarly worded in claim 21.

In light of the foregoing, the examiner is respectfully requested to enter this amendment, reconsider the case and allow the pending claims.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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**VERSION TO SHOW MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE**

**Attachment Claims Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. 1.121(c)(1)(ii)**

Please amend claims 1, 20 and 22 as follows:

1. (Twice Amended) An emergency reporting apparatus for a vehicle, comprising:
  - a microphone;
  - a loudspeaker;
  - a handsfree system circuit;
  - means for allowing handsfree two-way speech communication with an emergency report receiving center via the microphone, the loudspeaker, and the handsfree system circuit; and
  - a volume control circuit connected to the loudspeaker for automatically controlling a volume level of sound generated by the loudspeaker at a predetermined constant level or higher during two-way speech communication between said emergency report receiving center and said emergency reporting apparatus.
20. (Amended) An emergency reporting apparatus for a vehicle, comprising:
  - a microphone;
  - a loudspeaker;
  - a handsfree system circuit;
  - a volume control circuit connected to the loudspeaker for controlling a volume level of sound generated by the loudspeaker at a predetermined constant level or higher during two-way speech communication between said emergency report receiving center and said emergency reporting apparatus;
  - a communication device; and
  - a processor operates to implement handsfree two-way speech communication with an emergency report receiving center via the microphone, the loudspeaker, the handsfree system circuit, and the communication device.
22. (Amended) An emergency reporting apparatus for a vehicle, comprising:

a microphone;

a loudspeaker;

a handsfree system circuit;

means for allowing handsfree two-way speech communication with an emergency report[:] receiving center via the microphone, the loudspeaker, and the handsfree system circuit; and

a volume control circuit connected to the loudspeaker for automatically controlling a volume level of sound generated by the loudspeaker at a predetermined constant level or higher during emergency reporting in response to a desired volume signal.